

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0299

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PP

SUBJ: BOUGAINVILLE SITUATION

1. PRIME MINISTER SOMARE IN REMARKS BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON 26 MARCH GAVE BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROPOSED COMPROMISE PACKAGE WITH BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS. THE SUSPENSION OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE REVOKED, AND ELECTIONS HELD WITHIN THIRTY DAYS THEREAFTER FOR A PROVINCIAL PREMIER AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE. AFTER THE ELECTION "SIGNIFICANT NEW POWERS" WILL BE GIVEN PROVINCIAL GOVT UNTIL A FINAL SOLUTION CAN BE WORKED OUT. PROVINCIAL LEADERS WILL REOCCUPY CENTRAL GOVT OWNED HOMES AND OFFICES FROM WHICH THEY WERE EVICTED. THE BOUGAINVILLE CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM (THE SIZE OF WHICH WAS UNDER DISPUTE) WILL BE CARRIED OUT, AND MONIES NOW FROZEN FROM BOUGAINVILLE COPPER MINE ROYALTIES WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY GONE TO BOUGAINVILLE AND THE NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES FUND WILL BE ONCE AGAIN GIVEN TO PROVINCIAL GOVT. PAST OFFENCES AGAINST LAW AND ORDER IN BOUGAINVILLE ARE NOT TO BE PROSECUTED, BUT THE PROVINCIAL GOVT WILL PAY COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE TO CENTRAL GOVT PROPERTY WHICH OCCURRED DURING PAST DISTURBANCES AND WILL ASSIST IN KEEPING SITUATION CLAM. A JOINT COMMITTEE WILL BE ESTABLISHED TO WORK AT A FINAL SOLUTION. LASTLY A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WILL BE PASSED ENTRENCHING THE PROVINCIAL GOVT PROVISIONS SO THAT PROVINCIAL GOVTS MAY BE ESTABLISHED COUNTRY-WIDE AS

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EACH DISTRICT IS PREPARED TO DO SO. THE ENTIRE PACKAGE

IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 1976.

2. SOMARE STATED BELIEF PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS LAST CHANCE TO SETTLE PROBLEM WITHOUT DIRECT CONFRONTATION, CALLED FOR PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR PACKAGE AND STATED HE WAS RISKING HIS POLITICAL REPUTATION ON THE ISSUE. DEBATE IN THE PARLIAMENT INDICATES HE HAS SUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO PUSH THROUGH PROGRAM.

3. THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE RECEIVED FATHER JOHN MOMIS' FORMAL LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM THE PARLIAMENT THE DAY AFTER SOMARE'S SPEECH. THE TIMING WAS COINCIDENTAL AND DID NOT REFLECT A NEW BREAK BETWEEN BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS AND SOMARE. MOMIS, IT WILL BE REMEMBERED, SENT A TELEGRAM OF RESIGNATION FROM NEW YORK LAST AUGUST AFTER GOING TO THE UNITED NATIONS, WHICH HOWEVER WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE SINCE IT WAS NOT SIGNED. MOMIS' SENSE OF TIMING IN COMPLYING WITH THE NICETIES REQUIRED LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED, BUT THE LATTER ITSELF WAS NOT MEANT TO REPRESENT A NEW THRUST AT THE GOVT.

4. COMMENT: INITIAL PLEA FOR COMPROMISE PACKAGE GENERALLY ACCEPTED BY PARLIAMENT. SOMARE APPEARS HONESTLY DESIROUS OF SETTLEMENT AND HAS GONE FAR TO MEET BOUGAINVILLE'S DEMANDS. THIS IS ALMOST COMPLETE REVERSAL OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION OF LAST YEAR. THE CRITICAL AREA OF THE NEGOTIATION IS THE QUESTION OF WHICH POWERS ARE TO BE GIVEN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. WE ARE SOMEWHAT CONCERNED THAT AS THE ATMOSPHERE OF "CRISES" FADES THE ISSUE WILL ONCE AGAIN BE ALLOWED TO SLIDE BY THE GPNG. AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF WORK WILL BE REQUIRED TO DETERMINE WHICH POWERS ARE TO BE HANDED TO THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVT AND TO SPELL THEM OUT IN DETAIL IN ORGANIC LEGISLATION. IF THE GPNG IS NOT PREPARED TO SHIFT THESE POWERS AFTER BOUGAINVILLE ELECTIONS BOUGAINVILLE COULD ONCE AGAIN CHARGE BAD FAITH. IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE IF THIS OCCURRED BECAUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME THERE WOULD BE AN ELECTED

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PROVINCIAL GOVT SITTING CLAIMING TO BE FULLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOUGAINVILLE PEOPLE. SUCH A "LEGITIMATE" GOVT COULD BE A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.

GPNG OFFICERS CLOSE TO SITUATION STATE THAT GPNG HAS FOCUSED ON THE ISSUE, IS WORKING ON ORGANIC LAWS, ETC. WE SENSE OPTIMISM IN OUR RECENT TALKS WITH GPNG PERSONNEL; WE HOPE IT IS NOT PREMATURE.

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